

AFRICAN REGIONAL SEMINAR ON NATIONAL ACCOUNTS STATISTICS

Addis Ababa, 14-18 November 2005

OPENING STATEMENT

OF

MR. AUGISTIN FOSU, DIRECTOR
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY DIVISION

Presented by
Mr Dimitri Sanga
Team leader of the Statistics Unit of the UNECA

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the Headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa and to this important workshop on "Compilation of National Accounts and use of National Accounts for Policy Analysis in African Countries".

I am particularly delighted to see among us experts from the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These organizations have contributed to the organization of this workshop in terms of technical support as well as provision of background material. I really appreciate this collaborative effort.

I am also happy to see a number of Directors and senior staff from National Statistical Offices at the present Workshop. This shows the importance that their respective governments attach to the compilation of national accounts statistics.

As you may be aware, at its session held in Addis Ababa from 25 April to 28 April 2005, the Committee on Development Information (CODI4) had noted the low implementation rate of the 1993 SNA in Africa, partly due to limited human and financial resource at the country level and the lack of adequate assistance from international partners.

Therefore, the Committee recommended that “the UNECA should play a substantial role in the implementation of the 1993 SNA, with special emphasis on capacity building activities, including workshops, training, provision of material, advisory missions, and ensuring effective collaboration with other regional and sub-regional institutions”.

In this context, CODI 4 recommended that African Statistical Offices and compiler agencies be significantly equipped in terms of both human and financial resources to enable them to timely compile the minimum requirements of data sets (MRDS) of national accounts, preferably using the framework of the 1993 SNA.

The Committee also outlined that Africa should participate in the revision of the 1993 SNA. So far, African countries are well represented in the Expert Group on 1993 SNA revision. Moreover, workshops on national accounts organized by regional commissions are expected to include significant

sessions on the 1993 SNA revision in their agenda. Accordingly,, I can reasonably assume that the outcomes of these workshops might help articulating an African position to be included in the 1993 SNA revision expected to be completed by 2008.

In its efforts to speed up the implementation of the 1993 SNA and following the CODI recommendations, the UNECA has conducted assessments and gathered a number of country reports highlighting the main issues hindering the implementation of the 1993 SNA in the region. According to the assessments, the impeding factors are limited financial and human resources as well as insufficient assistance from international partners.

The Inter Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) has determined the 1993 SNA implementation as (i) compilation of a minimum requirement data set (MRDS) in a timely manner and with (ii) compliance with the concept of the 1993SNA.

So far, regarding conceptual compliance with the 1993 SNA, progress has been made in the African continent and increasing number of countries are in transition toward the implementation of the 1993 SNA. Accordingly, we have every reason to believe that African countries do also have the potential of implementing the revised 1993 SNA.

Concerning the MRDS, increasing number of countries compiles the MRDS but not as timely as recommended while meeting the deadlines still poses a challenge for National statistical offices.

The main objectives of the present Workshop are, as follows:

Firstly: to provide a forum for consultation on methodological and practical issues relating to the 1993 SNA update. This is part of a larger, worldwide consultation process with developing countries on the update. During this workshop, key issues of 1993 SNA update and expert recommendations for changes will be discussed with the aim of seeking comments and feedback from African countries.

Secondly: To provide a forum to discuss the use of national accounts data in economic policy formulation and analysis.

And Finally: To strengthen the capacity of the selected countries in compiling and maintaining national accounts statistics, with special focus on practical guidance related to the implementation of the update issues and on institutional issues namely staffing, financial resources, internal organizations as well as coordination with Central Banks and finance ministries.

Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having carefully reviewed your agenda and program of work and being fully aware of your professional background and recognition, I am confident that you will achieve the above-mentioned objectives.

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I end my statement, let me express my sincere thanks to the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and IMF for its technical support to the organization of this Workshop.

I hope the deliberations of this meeting will determine mechanisms and clear strategy to implement the updated 1993 SNA, so that increasing African countries will be 1993 SNA implementers.

I wish you success in your deliberations.